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Among the names we find those of two Americans, Dr. Rensselaer and Mr. Howard, who ascended in 1819.

We have as yet said nothing of the novels of Dumas, which form rather the most bulky portion of his works. There is less need of noticing them at length, as they evince less talent than his other productions, though they are equally characteristic of his school, and as some of them have been translated and published in this country. One of them, "Pauline," appeared recently from the American press. It is a strange tale, in which horrible incidents are accumulated, too improbable to create any illusion, and without sufficient force of coloring or style to become interesting as a work of art. "Isabel of Bavaria" and some others are historical romances, the story following at times very closely the course of real events, and not embellished with sufficient copiousness of invention or descriptive power to correspond with the dignity of the characters or the richness of the materials. It would be idle to compare them with the magic creations of Scott, as they are much inferior to works of the same class by the writer's countrymen. They belong to the mass of indifferent fictions, which the press of France, England, and America is now sending forth in vast profusion, adapted for a great multitude of uninstructed readers, who seem to find nothing better than the perusal of such trash for the amusement of their leisure hours.

ART. VI. — *Life in Mexico during a Residence of Two Years in that Country*. By Madame C— DE LA B—. Boston : Little & Brown. Two Volumes. 12mo.

IN the present age of high literary activity, travellers make not the least importunate demands on public attention, and their lucubrations, under whatever name, — Rambles, Notices, Incidents, Pencillings, — are nearly as important a staple for the "trade," as novels and romances. A book of travels, formerly, was a very serious affair. The traveller set out on his distant journey with many a solemn preparation, made his will, and bade adieu to his friends, like one who might not again return. If he did return, the

results were embodied in a respectable folio, or at least quarto, well garnished with cuts, and done up in a solid form, which argued that it was no fugitive publication, but destined for posterity.

All this is changed. The voyager now-a-days leaves home with as little ceremony and leave-taking, as if it were for a morning's drive. He steps into the bark that is to carry him across thousands of miles of ocean, with the moral certainty of returning in a fixed week, almost at a particular day. Parties of gentlemen and ladies go whizzing along in their steam-ships over the route, which cost so many weary days to the Argonauts of old, and run over the choicest scenes of classic antiquity, scattered through Europe, Asia, and Africa, in less time than it formerly took to go from one end of the British isles to the other. The Cape of Good Hope, so long the great stumblingblock to the navigators of Europe, is doubled, or the Red Sea coasted, in the same way by the fashionable tourist, who glides along the shores of Arabia, Persia, Afghanistan, Bombay, and Hindostan, further than the furthest limits of Alexander's conquests, — before the last leaves of the last new novel which he has taken by the way are fairly cut. The facilities of communication have, in fact, so abridged distances, that geography, as we have hitherto studied it, may be said to be entirely reformed. Instead of leagues, we now compute by hours, and we find ourselves next door neighbours to those whom we had looked upon as antipodes.

The consequence of these improvements in the means of intercourse is, that all the world goes abroad ; or, at least, one half is turned upon the other. Nations are so mixed up by this process that they are in some danger of losing their idiosyncrasy ; and the Egyptian and the Turk, though they still cling to their religion, are becoming European in their notions and habits more and more every day.

The taste for pilgrimage, however, it must be owned, does not stop with the countries, where it can be carried on with such increased facility. It has begotten a nobler spirit of adventure, something akin to what existed in the fifteenth century, when the world was new, or newly discovering, and a navigator, who did not take in sail, like the cautious seamen of Knickerbocker, might run down some strange continent in the dark. For, in these times of dandy tourists

and travel-mongers, the boldest achievements, that have hitherto defied the most adventurous spirits, have been performed ; the Himmaleh mountains have been scaled, the Niger ascended, the burning heart of Africa penetrated, the icy Arctic and Antarctic explored, and the mysterious monuments of the semi-civilized races of Central America have been thrown open to the public gaze. It is certain that this is a high-pressure age, and every department of science and letters, physical and mental, feels its stimulating influence.

No nation on the whole has contributed so largely to these itinerant expeditions as the English. Uneasy, it would seem, at being cooped up in their little isle, they sally forth in all directions, swarming over the more cultivated and luxurious countries of the neighbouring continent, and sending out stragglers on other more distant and formidable missions. Whether it be that their soaring spirits are impatient of the narrow quarters which nature has assigned them ; or that there exists a supernumerary class of idlers, who, wearied out with the monotony of home, and the same dull round of dissipation, seek excitement in strange scenes and adventures ; or whether they go abroad for the sunshine, of which they have heard so much, but seen so little, — whatever be the cause, they furnish a far greater number of tourists than all the world beside. We Americans, indeed, may compete with them in mere locomotion ; for our familiarity with magnificent distances at home, makes us still more indifferent to them abroad. But this locomotion is generally in the way of business, and the result is rarely shown in a book, — unless, indeed, it be the leger.

Yet John Bull is on many accounts less fitted than most of his neighbours for the duties of a traveller. However warm and hospitable in his own home, he has a cold reserve in his exterior, a certain chilling atmosphere, which he carries along with him, that freezes up the sympathies of strangers ; and which is only to be completely thawed by long and intimate acquaintance. But the traveller has no time for intimate acquaintances. He must “ go ahead,” and trust to his first impressions, — for they will also be his last. Unluckily it rarely falls out that the first impressions of honest John are very favorable. There is too much pride, not to say *hauteur* in his composition, which, with the best intentions in the world, will show itself in a way not particularly

flattering to those who come in contact with him. He goes through a strange nation, treading on all their little irritable prejudices, shocking their self-love and harmless vanities, in short, going against the grain, and roughing up every thing by taking it the wrong way. Thus he draws out the bad humors of the people among whom he moves, sees them in their most unamiable and by no means natural, aspect, — in short, looks on the wrong side of the tapestry. What wonder if his notions are somewhat awry as to what he sees! There are, it is true, distinguished exceptions to all this; English travellers, who cover the warm heart, — as warm as it is generally true and manly, — under a kind and sometimes cordial manner. But they are the exceptions. The Englishman undoubtedly appears best on his own soil, where his national predilections and prejudices, or at least the intimation of them, are somewhat mitigated in deference to his guest.

Another source of the disqualification of John Bull for being a calm and philosophic traveller, is the manner in which he has been educated at home; the soft luxuries by which he has been surrounded from his cradle, until luxuries have become necessities, — and accustomed to perceive all the machinery of life glide along as noiselessly and as swiftly as the foot of Time itself, he becomes morbidly sensitive to every temporary jar or derangement in the working of it. In no country since the world was made, have all the appliances for mere physical, and we may add intellectual indulgence, been carried to such perfection, as in this little island nucleus of civilization. Nowhere can a man get such returns for his outlay. The whole organization of society is arranged so as to minister to the comforts of the wealthy; and an Englishman, with the golden talisman in his pocket, can bring about him genii to do his bidding, and transport himself over distances with a thought, almost as easily as if he were the possessor of Aladin's magic lamp, and the fairy carpet of the Arabian Tales.

When he journeys over his little island, his comforts and luxuries cling as close to him as round his own fireside. He rolls along roads as smooth and well-beaten as those in his own park; is swept onward by sleek and well-groomed horses, in a carriage as soft and elastic, and quite as showy as his own equipage; puts up at inns, that may vie with his

own castle in all their comforts and accommodations, and is received by crowds of obsequious servants, more solicitous, probably, even than his own to win his golden smiles. In short, wherever he goes, he may be said to carry along with him his castle, park, equipage, establishment. The whole are in movement together. He changes place, indeed, but changes nothing else ; for travelling, as it occurs in other lands, hard roads, harder beds, and hardest fare,— he knows no more of it, than if he had been passing from one wing of his castle to the other.

All this, it must be admitted, is rather an indifferent preparation for a tour on the Continent. Of what avail is it, that Paris is the most elegant capital, France the most enlightened country, on the European *terra-firma*, if one cannot walk out in the streets without the risk of being run over for want of a *trottoire*, nor move on the roads without being half smothered in a lumbering vehicle, dragged by ropes, at the rate of five miles an hour ? Of what account are all the fine music and paintings, the architecture and art of Italy, when one must shiver by day from want of carpets and sea-coal fires, and be thrown into a fever at night by the active vexations of a still more tormenting kind ? The galled equestrian might as well be expected to feel nothing but raptures and ravishment at the fine scenery through which he is riding. It is probable he will think much more of his own petty hurts than of the beauties of nature. A travelling John Bull, if his skin is not off, is at least so thin-skinned, that it is next door to being so.

If the European neighbourhood affords so many means of annoyance to the British traveller, they are incalculably multiplied on this side of the water, and that, too, under circumstances which dispose him still less to charity in his criticisms and constructions. On the Continent he feels he is among strange races, born and bred under different religious and political institutions, and, above all, speaking different languages. He does not necessarily, therefore, measure them by his peculiar standard, but allows them one of their own. The dissimilarity is so great, in all the main features of national polity and society, that it is hard to institute a comparison. Whatever be his contempt for the want of progress and perfection in the science of living, he comes to regard them as a distinct race, amenable to different laws, and therefore

licensed to indulge in different usages, to a certain extent, from his own. If a man travels in China, he makes up his mind to chop-sticks. If he should go to the Moon, he would not be scandalized by seeing people walk with their heads under their arms. He has embarked on a different planet. It is only in things, which run parallel to those in his own country, that a comparison can be instituted, and charity too often fails, where criticism begins.

Unhappily, in America, the Englishman finds these points of comparison forced on him at every step. He lands among a people speaking the same language, professing the same religion, drinking at the same fountains of literature, trained in the same occupations of active life. The towns are built on much the same model with those in his own land. The brick houses, the streets, the "side-walks," the in-door arrangements, all, in short, are near enough on the same pattern to provoke a comparison. Alas ! for the comparison. The cities sink, at once, into mere provincial towns, the language degenerates into a provincial *patois*, the manners, the fashions, down to the cut of the clothes, and the equipages, all are provincial. The people, the whole nation, — as independent as any, certainly, if not, as our orators fondly descant, the best and most enlightened upon earth, — dwindle into a mere British colony. The traveller does not seem to understand that he is treading the soil of the New World, where every thing is new, where antiquity dates but from yesterday, where the present and the future are all and the past nothing, where hope is the watchword, and "Go ahead !" the principle of action. He does not comprehend, that when he sets foot on such a land, he is no longer to look for old hereditary landmarks, old time-honored monuments and institutions, old families, that have vegetated on the same soil since the Conquest. He must be content to part with the order and something of the decorum incident to an old community, where the ranks are all precisely and punctually defined, where the power is deposited by prescriptive right in certain privileged hands, and where the great mass have the careful obsequiousness of dependents, looking for the crumbs that fall.

He is now among a new people ; where every thing is in movement, all struggling to get forward, and where, though many go adrift in their wild spirit of adventure, and a tempo-

rary check may be sometimes felt by all, the great mass still advances. He is landed on a hemisphere, where fortunes are to be made, and men are employed in getting, not in spending, — a difference which explains so many of the discrepancies between the structure of our own society and habits, and those of the old world. To know how to spend, is itself a science ; and the science of spending and that of getting are rarely held by the same hand.

In such a state of things, the whole arrangement of society, notwithstanding the apparent resemblance to that in his own country, and its real resemblance in minor points, is reversed. The rich proprietor, who does nothing but fatten on his rents, is no longer at the head of the scale, as in the Old World. The man of enterprise takes the lead in a bustling community, where action and progress, or at least change, are the very conditions of existence. The upper classes, — if the term can be used in a complete democracy, — have not the luxurious finish and accommodations, to be found in the other hemisphere. The humbler classes have not the poverty-stricken, cringing spirit of hopeless inferiority. The pillar of society, if it want the Corinthian capital, wants also the heavy and superfluous base. Every man, not only professes to be, but is practically on a footing of equality with his neighbour. The traveller must not expect to meet here the deference, or even the courtesies, which grow out of distinction of castes. This is an awkward dilemma for one, whose nerves have never been jarred by contact with the great *profane* ; who has never been tossed about in the rough and tumble of humanity. It is little to him, that the poorest child in the community learns how to read and write ; that the poorest man can have, — what Henry the Fourth so good-naturedly wished for the humblest of his subjects, — a fowl in his pot, every day for his dinner ; that no one is so low, but that he may aspire to all the rights of his fellow-men, and find an open theatre, on which to display his own peculiar talents.

As the tourist strikes into the interior, difficulties of all sorts multiply, incident to a raw and unformed country. The comparison with the high civilization at home becomes more and more unfavorable, as he is made to feel that in this land of promise, it must be long before promise can become the performance of the Old World. And yet, if he would look

beyond the surface, he would see that much here too has been performed, however much may be wanting. He would see lands over which the wild Indian roamed as a hunting-ground, teeming with harvests for the consumption of millions here and across the water ; forests, which have shot up, ripened, and decayed on the same spot ever since the creation, now swept away to make room for towns and villages, thronged with an industrious population ; rivers, which rolled on in their solitudes, undisturbed except by the wandering bark of the savage, now broken and dimpled by hundreds of steamboats, freighted with the rich tribute of the country thus rescued from the wilderness. He would not expect to meet the careful courtesies of polished society in the pioneers of civilization, whose mission, to use the cant word of the day, has been, to recover the great continent from the bear and the buffalo. He would have some charity for their ignorance of the latest fashions of Bond Street ; and their departure, sometimes, even from what, in the old country, is considered as the decorum, and it may be decencies, of life. But not so ; his heart turns back to his own land, and closes against the rude scenes around him. For he finds here none of the soft graces of cultivation, or the hallowed memorials of an early civilization ; no gray, weather-beaten cathedrals, telling of the Normans ; no Gothic churches, in their groves of venerable oaks ; no moss-covered cemeteries, in which the dust of his fathers has been gathered since the time of the Plantagenets ; no rural cottages, half smothered with roses and honey-suckles, intimating that even in the most humble abodes the taste for the beautiful has found its way ; no trim gardens, and fields blossoming with hawthorn hedges and miniature culture ; no ring fences, inclosing well-shaven lawns, woods so disposed as to form a picture of themselves, bright threads of silvery water, and sparkling fountains. All these are wanting, and his eyes turn with disgust from the wild and rugged features of nature, and all her rough accompaniments, — from man almost as wild ; and his heart sickens as he thinks of his own land, and all its scenes of beauty. He thinks not of the poor, who leave that land for want of bread, and find in this a kindly welcome, and the means of independence and advancement, which their own denies them.

He goes on, if he be a splenetic Sinbad, discharging his

sour bile on everybody that he comes in contact with, thus producing an amiable ripple in the current as he proceeds, that adds marvellously, no doubt, to his own quiet and personal comfort. If he have a true merry vein and hearty good-nature, he gets on, laughing sometimes in his sleeve at others, and cracking his jokes on the unlucky fate of Brother Jonathan, who, if he is not very silly, — which he very often is, — laughs too, and joins in the jest, though it may be somewhat at his own expense. It matters little whether the tourist be Whig or Tory in his own land ; if the latter, he returns, probably, ten times the conservative that he was when he left it. If Whig, or even Radical, it matters not ; his loyalty waxes warmer and warmer with every step of his progress among the republicans ; and he finds, that practical democracy, shouldering and elbowing its neighbours, as it “ goes ahead,” is no more like the democracy, which he has been accustomed to admire in theory, than the real machinery, with its smell, smoke, and clatter, under full operation, is like the pretty toy, which he sees as a model in the Patent-Office at Washington.

On the whole, there seems to be no people better constituted for travellers, at least for recording their travelling experiences, than the French. There is a mixture of frivolity and philosophy in their composition, which is admirably suited to the exigencies of their situation. They mingle readily with all classes and races, discarding for the time their own nationality, — at least their national antipathies. Their pleasant vanity fills them with the desire of pleasing others, which most kindly reacts by their being themselves pleased ;

“ Pleased with himself, whom all the world can please.”

The Frenchman can even so far accommodate himself to habits alien to his own, that he can tolerate those of the savages themselves, and enter into a sort of fellowship with them, without either party altogether discarding his national tastes and propensities. It is Chateaubriand, if we are not mistaken, who relates, that, wandering in the solitudes of the American wilderness, his ears were most unexpectedly saluted by the sounds of a violin. He had little doubt that one of his own countrymen must be at hand ; and in a wretched enclosure, he found one of them, sure enough, teaching *Messieurs les*

sauvages to dance. It is certain, that this spirit of accommodation to the wild habits of their copper-colored friends gave the French traders and missionaries, formerly, an ascendancy over the Aborigines, which was never obtained by any other of the white men.

The most comprehensive and truly philosophic work on the genius and institutions of this country, the best exposition of its social phenomena, its present condition, and probable future, are to be found in the pages of a Frenchman. It is in the French language, too, that by far the greatest work has been produced on the great Southern portion of our continent, once comprehended under New Spain.

To write a book of travels seems to most people to require as little preliminary preparation as to write a letter. One has only to jump into a coach, embark on board a steamboat, minute down his flying experiences and hair-breadth escapes, the aspect of the country as seen from the interior of a crowded diligence, or a vanishing rail-car, note the charges of the landlords and the quality of the fare, a dinner or two at the minister's, the last new play or opera at the theatre, and the affair is done. It is very easy to do this, certainly ; very easy to make a bad book of travels, — but by no means easy to make a good one. This requires as many and various qualifications as to make any other good book ; qualifications which must vary with the character of the country one is to visit. Thus, for instance, it requires a very different preparation and stock of accomplishments to make the tour of Italy, its studios and its galleries of art, or of Egypt with its immortal pyramids and mighty relics of a primeval age, the great cemetery of antiquity, — from what it does to travel understandingly in our own land, a new creation, as it were, without monuments, without arts, where the only study of the traveller, — the noblest of all studies, it is true, — is man. The inattention to this difference of preparation, demanded by different places, has led many a clever writer to make a very worthless book, which would have been remedied had he consulted his own qualifications, instead of taking the casual direction of the first steamboat or mail-coach that lay in his way.

There is no country more difficult to discuss in all its multifarious aspects, than Mexico, or rather the wide region, once comprehended under the name of New Spain. Its various

climates, bringing to perfection the vegetable products of the most distant latitudes ; its astonishing fruitfulness in its lower regions, and its curse of barrenness over many a broad acre of its plateau ; its inexhaustible mines, that have flooded the Old World with an ocean of silver, such as Columbus in his wildest visions never dreamed of, — and unhappily, by a hard mischance, never lived to realize himself ; its picturesque landscape, where the volcanic fire gleams amid wastes of eternal snow, and a few hours carry the traveller from the hot regions of the lemon and the cocoa to the wintry solitudes of the mountain fir ; its motley population made up of Indians, old Spaniards, modern Mexicans, meztizoes, mulattoes, and zambos ; its cities built in the clouds ; its lakes of salt water, hundreds of miles from the ocean ; its people with their wild and picturesque costume, in keeping, as we may say, with its extraordinary scenery ; its stately palaces, half furnished, where services of gold and silver plate load the tables in rooms without a carpet, while the red dust of the bricks soils the diamond-sprinkled robes of the dancer ; the costly attire of its higher classes, blazing with pearls and jewels ; the tawdry magnificence of its equipages, saddles inlaid with gold, bits and stirrups of massy silver, all executed in the clumsiest style of workmanship ; its lower classes, — the men with their jackets, glittering with silver buttons, and rolls of silver tinsel round their caps, the women with petticoats fringed with lace, and white satin shoes on feet unprotected by a stocking ; its high-born fair ones crowding to the cockpit, and solacing themselves with the fumes of a cigar ; its churches and convents, in which all the sombre rules of monastic life are maintained in their primitive rigor, while they have died away before the liberal spirit of the age on the other side of the water ; its swarms of *léperos*, the lazzaroni of the land ; its hordes of almost legalized banditti, who stalk openly in the streets, and render the presence of an armed escort necessary to secure a safe drive into the environs of the capital ; its whole structure of society, in which a republican form is thrown over institutions as aristocratic, and castes as nicely defined, as in any monarchy of Europe ; in short, its marvellous inconsistencies and contrasts in climate, character of the people, and face of the land, — so marvellous, as, we trust, to excuse the unprecedented length of this sentence, — undoubtedly make modern Mexico one

of the most prolific, original, and difficult themes for the study of the traveller.

Yet this great theme has found in Humboldt a writer of strength, sufficient to grapple with it in nearly all its relations. While yet a young man, or, at least, while his physical as well as mental energies were in their meridian, he came over to this country, with an enthusiasm for science, which was only heightened by obstacles, and with stores of it already accumulated, that enabled him to detect the nature of every new object that came under his eye, and arrange it in its proper class. With his scientific instruments in his hand, he might be seen scaling the snow-covered peaks of the Cordilleras, or diving into their unfathomable caverns of silver ; now wandering through their dark forests in search of new specimens for his herbarium, — now coasting the stormy shores of the Gulf, and penetrating its unhealthy streams, jotting down every landmark that might serve to guide the future navigator, or surveying the crested Isthmus in search of a practicable communication between the great seas on its borders, — and then again patiently studying the monuments and manuscripts of the Aztecs in the capital, or mingling with the wealth and fashion in its saloons, — frequenting every place, in short, and everywhere at home ;

“ Grammaticus, rhetor, geometres, omnia novit.”

The whole range of these various topics is brought under review in his pages, and on all he sheds a ray, sometimes a flood, of light. His rational philosophy, content rather to doubt than to decide, points out the track, which other adventurous spirits may follow up with advantage. No antiquary has done so much towards determining the original hives of the semi-civilized races of the Mexican plateau. No one, not even of the Spaniards, has brought together such an important mass of information in respect to the resources, natural products, and statistics, generally, of New Spain. His explorations have identified more than one locality, and illustrated more than one curious monument, of the people of Anahuac, which had baffled the inquiries of native antiquaries ; and his work, while embodying the results of profound scholarship and art, is, at the same time, in many respects, the very best *manuel du voyageur*, and, as such, has been most freely used by subsequent tourists. It is true,

his pages are sometimes disfigured by pedantry, ambitious display, learned obscurity, and other affectations of the man of letters. But what human work is without its blemishes ? His various writings on the subject of New Spain, taken collectively, are one of those monuments, which may be selected to show the progress of the species. Their author reminds us of one of the ancient athletæ, who descended into the arena to hurl the discus with a giant arm, that distanced every cast of his contemporaries !

There is one branch of his fruitful subject, which M. de Humboldt has not exhausted, and, indeed, has but briefly touched on. This is the social condition of the country, especially as found in its picturesque capital. This has been discussed by subsequent travellers more fully, and Ward, Bullock, Lyons, Poinsett, Tudor, Latrobe, have all produced works, which have for their object, more or less, the social habits and manners of the people. With most of them this is not the prominent object ; and others of them, probably, have found obstacles in effecting it, to any great extent, from an imperfect knowledge of the language, — the golden key to the sympathies of a people ; without which a traveller is as much at fault, as a man without an eye for color in a picture-gallery, or an ear for music at a concert. He may see and hear, indeed, in both, but *cui bono* ? The traveller, ignorant of the language of the nation whom he visits, may descant on the scenery, the roads, the architecture, the outside of things, the rates and distances of posting, the dress of the people in the streets, and may possibly meet a native or two, half denaturalized, kept to dine with strangers at his banker's. But, as to the interior mechanism of society, its secret sympathies, and familiar tone of thinking and feeling, he can know no more, than he could of the contents of a library, by running over the titles of strange and unknown authors packed together on the shelves.

It was to supply this deficiency, that the work before us, no doubt, was given to the public, and it was composed under circumstances, that afforded every possible advantage and facility to its author. Although the initials only of the name are given in the title-page, yet, from these and certain less equivocal passages in the body of the work, it requires no Œdipus to divine, that the author is the wife of the

Chevalier Calderon de la Barca, well known in this country during his long residence, as Spanish minister, at Washington, where his amiable manners and high personal qualities secured him general respect, and the regard of all who knew him. On the recognition of the independence of Mexico by the mother country, Señor de Calderon was selected to fill the office of the first Spanish envoy to the Republic. It was a delicate mission after so long an estrangement, and it was hailed by the Mexicans with every demonstration of pride and satisfaction. Though twenty years had elapsed since they had established their independence, yet they felt as a wayward son may feel, who, having absconded from the paternal roof, and set up for himself, still looks back to it with a sort of reverence, and, in the plenitude of his prosperity, still feels the want of the parental benediction. We, who cast off our allegiance in a similar way, can comprehend the feeling. The new minister, from the moment of his setting foot on the Mexican shore, was greeted with an enthusiasm, which attested the popular feeling ; and his presence in the capital was celebrated by theatrical exhibitions, bull-fights, illuminations, *fêtes* public and private, and every possible demonstration of respect for the new envoy and the country who sent him. His position secured him access to every place of interest to an intelligent stranger, and introduced him into the most intimate recesses of society, from which the stranger is commonly excluded, and to which, indeed, none but a Spaniard could, under any circumstances, have been admitted. Fortunately the minister possessed, in the person of his accomplished wife, one, who had both the leisure and the talent to profit by these uncommon opportunities ; and the result is given in the work before us, consisting of letters to her family, which, it seems, since her return to the United States, have been gathered together, and prepared for publication.

On the 29th of October, 1839, Madame de Calderon embarked with her husband in a vessel for Havana, on her way to Mexico. The voyage was checkered by no remarkable incidents or perilous adventures. On entering the West Indian seas, the thoughts of the voyager naturally turned to the great navigator, whose sails were first spread on their bosom.

“It is well to read the History of Columbus at sea, but especially in these waters, where he wandered in suspense, high-wrought expectation, and firm faith; and to watch the signs which the noble mariner observed in these latitudes; the soft serenity of the breezes, the clear blue of the heavens, the brilliancy and number of the stars, the sea-weeds of the gulf, which always drift in the direction of the wind, the little land-birds, that come like harbingers of good tidings, the frequency of the shooting stars, and the multitude of flying-fish.

“As the shades of evening close around, and the tropical sky glitters with the light of innumerable stars, imagination transports us back to that century, which stands out in bold relief amidst other ages rolling by comparatively undistinguished, and we see, as in a vision, the Discoverer of a World, standing on the deck of his caravel, as it bounded over the unknown and mysterious waste of waters, his vigilant eyes fixed on the west, like a Persian intently watching the rising of his god; though his star was to arise from whence the day-god sets. We see him bending his gaze on the first dark line, that separated the watery sea from the blue of the heavens, striving to penetrate the gloom of night, yet waiting with patient faith until the dawn of day should bring the long wished-for shores in sight.” — Vol. i. p. 6.

Preparations had been made for their reception by the authorities of Havana, where Señor de Calderon was to remain until a government vessel could be got ready to transport him to Mexico. Cuba has been visited by so many thousands of Americans, that one might imagine nothing new could be told us of it. But our countrymen go there mostly for business or health, rarely acquainted with the language, and see little or nothing of the higher society of the island. We have room only for one extract from the description of this, which shows, that the aristocracy of Cuba emulate that of the mother country in the splendor of their way of living.

“I can speak with more decision on the subject of a great ball given us by the Countess F——a, last evening, which was really superb. The whole house was thrown open, — there was a splendid supper, quantities of refreshments, and the whole select aristocracy of Havana. Diamonds on all the women, jewels and orders on all the men, magnificent lustres and mirrors, and a capital band of music in the gallery.

“The Captain-General was the only individual in a plain

dress. He made himself very agreeable, in good French. About one hundred couple stood up in each country dance, but the rooms are so large and so judiciously lighted, that we did not feel at all warm. Waltzes, quadrilles, and these long Spanish dances succeeded each other. Almost all the girls have fine eyes and beautiful figures, but without color or much animation. The finest diamonds were those of the Countess F——a, particularly her necklace, which was *undeniable*.

“Walking through the rooms after supper, we were amused to see the negroes and negresses helping themselves plentifully to the sweetmeats, uncorking and drinking fresh bottles of Champagne, and devouring everything on the supper-tables, without the slightest concern for the presence either of their master or mistress; in fact, behaving like a multitude of spoiled children, who are sure of meeting with indulgence, and presume upon it.

“Towards morning we were led down stairs to a large suite of rooms, containing a library of several thousand volumes, where coffee, cakes, &c., were prepared in very beautiful Sèvres porcelain and gold plate. We left the house, at last, to the music of the national hymn of Spain, which struck up as we passed through the gallery.”—Vol. 1. pp. 24, 25.

After passing a fortnight amidst the elegant hospitality of Havana, our travellers embarked in a Spanish vessel of war of twenty-five guns, manned by a crew of one hundred and fifty men. In a few days they made the coast of New Spain. But the voyager to that country must take his choice of the *vomito*, or yellow fever, in the hot months, or of the *norte*, the north wind, which sweeps over these latitudes in the autumnal and winter seasons. Our voyagers chose the latter, and got the full benefit of it. For several days they were tossing about in sight of the coast, and, though in a fast-sailing vessel, consumed more than three weeks in the voyage, which a steamship would perform in half a one. At length they landed, on the 18th of December, at the port of Vera Cruz, the city of the True Cross, on the same spot, then a desolate sand-bank, where Hernando Cortes had first set his foot, more than three centuries ago. But our author shall speak for herself.

“Any thing more melancholy, *délabré*, and forlorn, than the whole appearance of things, as we drew near, cannot well be imagined. On one side, the fort, with its black and red walls; on the other, the miserable, black-looking city, with hordes of

large black birds, called *spilotes*, hovering over some dead carcass, or flying heavily along in search of carrion. Still, as the goal of our voyage, even its dreary aspect was welcome, and the very hills of red sand by which it is surrounded, and which look like the deserts of Arabia, appeared inviting.

“A boat, full of cocked hats, was now seen approaching from the city, containing the Consul in full uniform, and other authorities. C——n having sent for and obtained permission from the Governor, to permit the *Jason*, contrary to established usages, to anchor beneath the castle, a salute of twenty guns was fired from our ship. Being upon deck, I was nearly suffocated with smoke and powder. A salute of the same number of cannon was then fired from the castle, in honor of the first Spanish man-of-war, that has appeared in this port since the Revolution.

“And now we prepared, before the sun went down, to leave our watery prison; and the captain’s boat being manned, and having taken leave of the officers, we, that is, C——n, the commander, and I, and my French maid, and her French poodle, got into it. Then came a salute of twenty guns from the *Jason* in our honor, and we rowed off amidst clouds of smoke. Then the fort gave us welcome with the same number of guns, and, amidst all this cannonading, we were landed at the wharf.

“A singular spectacle the wharf presented. A crowd, as far as the eye could reach, of all ages and sexes of Vera-Cruzians (and a very curious set they seemed to be) were assembled to witness His Excellency’s arrival. Some had no pantaloons; and others, to make up for their neighbours’ deficiencies, had two pair, — the upper slit up the side of the leg, Mexican fashion. All had large hats, with silver or bead rolls, and every tinge of dark complexion, from the pure Indian, upwards. Some dresses were entirely composed of rags, clinging together by the attraction of cohesion; others had only a few holes to let in the air. All were crowding, jostling, and nearly throwing each other into the water, and gazing with faces of intense curiosity.

“But a plume of colored feathers was seen towering above the copper-colored crowd, and immediate passage was made for an aid-de-camp from the Governor, General Guadalupe Victoria. He was an immensely tall man, in a showy uniform all covered with gold, with colossal epaulettes, and a towering plume of rainbow-colored feathers. He brought to C——n the welcome and congratulations of the General, and those Spanish offers of service and devotion which sound agreeably, whatever be their true value.” — Vol. I. pp. 37–39.

Madame de Calderon gives some particulars of this commander, famous in the revolutionary history of Mexico. One, however, more extraordinary than any she states, is mentioned by Ward, who says, that the General, when secreting himself in the deserts for a year, learned to live without food for five days at a time, and that ever since it has been exceedingly annoying to him to eat more than once in twenty-four hours. Some of our dyspeptics might learn a wholesome lesson under this abstemious chief.

Our author gives a fuller account of a much more distinguished personage, the present president of the Republic, Santa Anna ; which, as it presents a novel picture also of the way of life among the great proprietors of the *tierra caliente*, or warm region, as the lower level of the country is styled, we will give *in extenso*.

“ Yesterday morning, at two o'clock, we rose by candle-light, with the pleasant prospect of leaving Vera Cruz and of seeing Santa Anna. Two boxes, called carriages, drawn by mules, were at the door, to convey us to Manga de Clavo. Señor V——o, C——n, the commander of the *Jason*, and I, being encased in them, we set off half asleep. By the faint light, we could just distinguish as we passed the gates, and the carriages ploughed their way along, nothing but sand, — sand, — as far as the eye could reach ; a few leagues of Arabian desert.

“ At length we began to see symptoms of vegetation ; occasional palm-trees and flowers, and, by the time we had reached a pretty Indian village, where we stopped to change mules, the light had broke in, and we seemed to have been transported, as if by enchantment, from a desert to a garden. It was altogether a picturesque and striking scene ; the huts composed of bamboo, and thatched with palm-leaves, the Indian women with their long black hair standing at the doors with their half-naked children, the mules rolling themselves on the ground, according to their favorite fashion, snow-white goats browsing among the palm-trees, and the air so soft and balmy, the first fresh breath of morning ; the dew-drops still glittering on the broad leaves of the banana and palm, and all around so silent, cool, and still.

“ The huts, though poor, were clean ; no windows, but a certain subdued light makes its way through the leafy canes. We procured some tumblers of new milk, and, having changed mules, pursued our journey, now no longer through hills of sand, but across the country, through a wilderness of trees and flowers, the glowing productions of *tierra caliente*. We arrived about

five at Manga de Clavo, after passing through leagues of natural garden, the property of Santa Anna.

"The house is pretty, slight-looking, and kept in nice order. We were received by an aid-de-camp in uniform, and by several officers, and conducted to a large, cool, agreeable apartment, with little furniture, into which shortly entered the Señora de Santa Anna, tall, thin, and, at that early hour of the morning, dressed to receive us in clear white muslin, with white satin shoes, and with very splendid diamond ear-rings, brooch, and rings. She was very polite, and introduced her daughter Guadalupe, a miniature of her mamma, in features and costume.

"In a little while entered General Santa Anna himself; a gentlemanly, good-looking, quietly dressed, rather melancholy-looking person, with one leg, apparently somewhat of an invalid, and to us the most interesting person in the group. He has a sallow complexion, fine dark eyes, soft and penetrating, and an interesting expression of face. Knowing nothing of his past history, one would have said a philosopher, living in dignified retirement, one who had tried the world, and found that all was vanity, one who had suffered ingratitude, and who, if he were ever persuaded to emerge from his retreat, would only do so, Cincinnatus-like, to benefit his country. It is strange, how frequently this expression of philosophic resignation, of placid sadness, is to be remarked on the countenances of the deepest, most ambitious, and most designing men. C——n gave him a letter from the Queen, written under the supposition of his being still President, with which he seemed much pleased, but merely made the innocent observation, 'How very well the Queen writes!'

"It was only now and then, that the expression of his eye was startling, especially when he spoke of his leg, which is cut off below the knee. He speaks of it frequently, like Sir John Ramorny of his bloody hand; and when he gives an account of his wound, and alludes to the French on that day, his countenance assumes that air of bitterness, which Ramorny's may have exhibited, when speaking of 'Harry the Smith.'

"Otherwise, he made himself very agreeable, spoke a great deal of the United States, and of the persons he had known there, and in his manners was quiet and gentlemanlike, and altogether a more polished hero than I had expected to see. To judge from the past, he will not long remain in his present state of inaction, besides having within him, according to Zavala, 'a principle of action for ever impelling him forward.'

"*En attendant*, breakfast was announced. The Señora de Santa Anna led me in. C——n was placed at the head of the table, I on his right, Santa Anna opposite, the Señora on my

right. The breakfast was very handsome, consisting of innumerable Spanish dishes, meat and vegetables, fish and fowl, fruits and sweetmeats, all served in white and gold French porcelain, with coffee, wines, &c. After breakfast, the Señora having despatched an officer for her cigar-case, which was gold with a diamond latch, offered me a cigar, which I having declined, she lighted her own, a little paper 'cigarito,' and the gentlemen followed her good example.

"We then proceeded to look at the out-houses and offices; at the General's favorite war-horse, an old white charger, probably a sincerer philosopher than his master; at several game-cocks, kept with especial care, cock-fighting being a favorite recreation of Santa Anna's; and at his *litera*, which is handsome and comfortable. There are no gardens, but, as he observed, the whole country, which for twelve leagues square belongs to him, is a garden. The appearance of the family says little for the healthiness of the *locale*; and indeed its beauty and fertility will not compensate for its insalubrity.

"As we had but a few hours to spare, the General ordered round two carriages, both very handsome, and made in the United States, one of which, conveyed him and C——n, the Señora and me. In the other were the little girl and the officers, in which order we proceeded across the country to the high road, where the diligence and servants, with our guide Don Miguel S——, were to overtake us. The diligence not having arrived, we got down and sat on a stone bench, in front of an Indian cottage, where we talked, while the young lady amused herself by eating apples, and C——n and the General remained moralizing in the carriage.

"Shortly after, and just as the sun was beginning to give us a specimen of his power, our lumbering escort of Mexican soldiers galloped up, (orders having been given by the government that a fresh escort shall be stationed every six leagues,) and announced the approach of the diligence. We were agreeably disappointed by the arrival of a handsome new coach, made in the United States, drawn by ten good-looking mules, and driven by a smart Yankee coachman. Our party consisted of ourselves, Don Miguel, the captain of the *Jason* and his first lieutenant, who accompany us to Mexico. The day was delightful, and every one apparently in good-humor. We took leave of General Santa Anna, his lady and daughter, also of our hospitable entertainer, Señor V——; got into the diligence, — doors shut, — all right, — lash up the mules, and now for Mexico!" — pp. 47 – 52.

Madame de Calderon was not mistaken in supposing that

this Mexican Cincinnatus only bided his time to leave the philosophic retirement of the country for the glittering seals of state.

The route of the travellers led them through more of this delicious scenery, which is reflected, with all its bright flush of coloring, in our author's page, as vividly as in a mirror.

"It was difficult to believe, as we journeyed on, that we were now in the midst of December. The air was soft and balmy. The heat, without being oppressive, that of a July day in England. The road lay through a succession of woody country; trees covered with every variety of blossom, and loaded with the most delicious tropical fruits; flowers of every color filling the air with fragrance, and the most fantastical profusion of parasitical plants intertwining the branches of the trees, and flinging their bright blossoms over every bough. Palms, cocoas, oranges, lemons, succeeded one another, and at one turn of the road, down in a lovely green valley, we caught a glimpse of an Indian woman, with her long hair, resting under the shade of a lofty tree, beside a running stream, — an Oriental picture. Had it not been for the dust and the jolting, nothing could have been more delightful. As for Don Miguel, with his head out of the window, now desiring the coachman to go more quietly, now warning us to prepare for a jolt, now pointing out every thing worth looking at, and making light of all difficulties, he was the very best conductor of a journey I ever met with. His hat of itself was a curiosity to us; a white beaver with immense brim, lined with thick silver tissue, with two large silver rolls and tassels round it.

"One circumstance must be observed by all who travel in Mexican territory. There is not one human being or passing object to be seen that is not in itself a picture, or which would not form a good subject for the pencil. The Indian women with their plaited hair, and little children slung at their backs, their large straw hats and petticoats of two colors, the long strings of *arrieros* with their loaded mules, and swarthy, wild-looking faces, — the chance horseman who passes with his *sarape* of many colors, his high, ornamented saddle, Mexican hat, silver stirrups and leather boots, — all is picturesque. Salvator Rosa and Hogarth might have travelled here to advantage, hand-in-hand; Salvator for the sublime, and Hogarth taking him up where the sublime became the ridiculous." — pp. 52 – 54.

After climbing up the steep sides of the table-land, amidst scenes checkered with beauty and sterility, but always in the highest degree picturesque, the party descended the mountain

slopes towards the Valley of Mexico. We regret that our limits will not allow us to give her spirited account of her entrance into the ancient capital of Montezuma. The whole population of the city, all who could command a carriage or a horse, came out to welcome the ambassador, who brought the olive branch in his hand. Most unfortunately, it was becoming late in the afternoon, and the rain fell in sheets of water, such as are met with only in tropical climates. It certainly was a damper to their brilliant *entrée* into the capital. The bright sun of the next day dispelled the gloom of their first impressions, and for some weeks the diplomatic train found abundant amusement and occupation in the magnificent entertainments given in honor of their arrival.

In the brilliant gallery of pictures, which our fair author has sketched, sometimes of the city and its inhabitants, embracing all classes and descriptions, at others of its beautiful environs, we know not which to select. We will take at hazard her visit to Chapultepec, the favorite retreat of the Aztec princes, not a league from the capital.

“We have spent the day in visiting the castle of Chapultepec, a short league from Mexico, the most haunted by recollections of all the traditionary sites of which Mexico can boast. Could these hoary cypresses speak, what tales might they not disclose, standing there with their long gray beards, and outstretched venerable arms, century after century; already old when Montezuma was a boy, and still vigorous in the days of Bustamante! There has the last of the Aztec emperors wandered with his dark-eyed harem. Under the shade of these gigantic trees he has rested, perhaps smoked his ‘tobacco mingled with amber,’ and fallen to sleep, his dreams unhaunted by visions of the stern traveller from the far-east, whose sails even then might be within sight of the shore. In these tanks he has bathed. Here were his gardens, and his aviaries, and his fish-ponds. Through these now tangled and deserted woods, he may have been carried by his young nobles in his open litter, under a splendid *dais*, stepping out upon the rich stuffs which his slaves spread before him on that green and velvet turf.

“And from the very rock where the Castle stands, he may have looked out upon his fertile valley, and great capital, with its canoe-covered lakes, and outspreading villages and temples, and gardens of flowers, no care for the future darkening the bright vision.

“Tradition says, that now these caves and tanks and woods

are haunted by the shade of the Conqueror's Indian love, the far-famed Doña Marina, but I think she would be afraid of meeting with the wrathful spirit of the Indian emperor.

"The Castle itself, modern though it be, seems like a tradition. The Viceroy Galvez, who built it, is of a by-gone race! The apartments are lonely and abandoned, the walls falling to ruin, the glass of the windows and the carved work of the doors have been sold; and, standing at this great height, exposed to every wind that blows, it is rapidly falling to decay. We were accompanied by Count C——a, and received by a Mexican governor, who rarely resides there, and who very civilly conducted us everywhere. But Chapultepec is not a *show-place*. One must go there early in the morning, when the dew is on the grass, or in the evening, when the last rays of the sun are gilding with rosy light the snowy summits of the volcanoes; and dismount from your horse, or step out of your carriage, and wander forth without guide, or object, or fixed time for return.

"We set off early, passing over a fine paved road, divided by a great and solid aqueduct of nine hundred arches, one of the two great aqueducts by which fresh water is conveyed to the city, and of which the two sources are in the hill of Chapultepec, and in that of Santa Fè, at a much greater distance. When we arrived, the sleepy soldiers, who were lounging before the gates, threw them open to let the carriage enter, and we drew up in front of the great cypress, known by the name of 'Montezuma's Cypress,' a most stupendous tree, dark, solemn, and stately, its branches unmoved as the light wind played amongst them, of most majestic height, and forty-one feet in circumference. A second cypress standing near, and of almost equal size, is even more graceful, and they, and all the noble trees which adorn these speaking solitudes, are covered with a creeping plant resembling gray moss, hanging over every branch like long gray hair, giving them a most venerable and druidical look.

"We wandered through the noble avenues, and rested under the trees, and walked through the tangled shrubberies, bright with flowers and colored berries, and groped our way into the cave, and stood by the large clear tank, and spent some time in the old garden; and then got again into the carriage, that we might be dragged up the precipitous ascent on which stands the Castle, the construction of which aroused the jealousy of the government against the young Count, whose taste for the picturesque had induced him to choose this elevated site for his summer palace." — Vol. I. p. 103 – 105.

One of the most striking features in Mexican society is the ambition of ornament, reaching from the peasant to

the noble, and displayed in the latter by such a prodigal show of jewelry, as is probably not surpassed in any court in Europe. Some of the old Spanish nobles found the means for this in the vast wealth derived from their mines. Among these, we are informed by our author,

“The Count de Regla was so wealthy, that when his son, the present Count, was christened, the whole party walked from his house to the church, upon ingots of silver. The Countess having quarrelled with the Vice-Queen, sent her, in token of reconciliation, a white satin slipper, entirely covered with large diamonds. The Count invited the King of Spain to visit his Mexican territories, assuring him that the hoofs of his Majesty's horse should touch nothing but solid silver from Vera Cruz to the capital. This might be a bravado; but a more certain proof of his wealth exists in the fact, that he caused two ships of the line, of the largest size, to be constructed in Havana at his expense, made of mahogany and cedar, and presented them to the King. The present Count was, as I already told you, married to the beautiful daughter of the *Güera Rodriguez*.” — Vol. I. p. 264.

After this we may not be surprised to find, that the ruling passion, strong in death, should affect the same lavish display, even where such magnificence becomes a mockery. Madame de Calderon tells a whimsical anecdote in relation to this.

“A lady of high rank having died in Mexico, her relatives undertook to commit her to her last resting-place, habited according to the then prevailing fashion, in her most magnificent dress, that which she had worn at her wedding. This dress was a wonder of luxury, even in Mexico. It was entirely composed of the finest lace, and the flounces were made of a species of point which cost fifty dollars a *vara* (the Mexican yard). Its equal was unknown. It was also ornamented and looped up at certain intervals with bows of ribband very richly embroidered in gold. In this dress, the Condesa de — was laid in her coffin, thousands of dear friends crowding to view her beautiful *costume de mort*, and at length she was placed in her tomb, the key of which was intrusted to the sacristan.

“From the tomb to the opera is a very abrupt transition; nevertheless, both have a share in this story. A company of French dancers appeared in Mexico, a twentieth-rate ballet, and the chief *danseuse* was a little French damsel, remarkable for the shortness of her robes, her coquetry, and her astonishing pirouettes. On the night of a favorite ballet, Mademoiselle Pau-

line made her *entrée* in a succession of pirouettes, and, poising on her toe, looked round for approbation, when a sudden thrill of horror, accompanied by a murmur of indignation, pervaded the assembly. Mademoiselle Pauline was equipped in the very dress in which the defunct Countess had been buried! Lace, point flounces, gold ribbands; impossible to mistake it. Hardly had the curtain dropped, when the little danseuse found herself surrounded by competent authorities, questioning her as to where and how she had obtained her dress. She replied, that she had bought it at an extravagant price from a French *modiste* in the city. She had rifled no tomb, but honestly paid down golden ounces, in exchange for her lawful property. To the *modiste's* went the officers of justice. She also pleaded innocent. She had bought it of a man who had brought it to her for sale, and had paid him much more than *à poids d'or*, as indeed it was worth. By dint of further investigation, the man was identified, and proved to be the sacristan of San —. Short-sighted sacristan! He was arrested and thrown into prison, and one benefit resulted from his cupidity, since, in order to avoid throwing temptation in the way of future sacristans, it became the custom, after the body had lain in state for some time in magnificent robes, to substitute a plain dress previous to placing the coffin in the vault. A poor vanity after all.

"I was told by a lady here, that on the death of her grandchild, he was not only enveloped in rich lace, but the diamonds of three Condesas and four Marquesas were collected together and put on him, necklaces, bracelets, rings, brooches, and tiaras, to the value of several hundred thousand dollars. The street was hung with draperies, and a band of music played, whilst he was visited by all the titled relatives of the family in his dead splendor, poor little baby! Yet his mother mourned for him as for all her blighted hopes, and the last scion of a noble house. Grief shows itself in different ways; yet one might think that when it seeks consolation in display, it must be less profound than when it shuns it." — Vol. i. pp. 134 – 136.

In the midst of this pomp of ornament and dress, one is particularly struck by the contrast afforded by the crowds of *léperos*, a caste of beggars, — or rather compound of beggar and bandit, — who swarm the streets, making it not only annoying, but oftentimes dangerous, to go abroad without an escort, particularly in the less frequented avenues and suburbs. The book contains many striking stories of this anomalous class of personages, as well as of the more daring marauders, for which we cannot find space, but which show such a total

absence of a police, as seems scarcely compatible with the existence of society. The following little anecdote shows the amiable terms on which the gentlemen of the road and of the robe stand with one another in Mexico. It is certainly very much à l'*Espagnole*.

"Apropos to which, the — Consul told us the other day, that some time ago, having occasion to consult Judge — upon an affair of importance, he was shown into an apartment where that functionary was engaged in conversation with some suspicious-looking individuals, or rather who were above suspicion, their appearance plainly indicating their calling. On the table before him lay a number of guns, swords, pistols, and all sorts of arms. The Judge requested Monsieur de — to be seated, observing, that he was investigating a case of robbery committed by these persons. The robbers were seated, smoking very much at their ease, and the Judge was enjoying the same innocent recreation; when his cigar becoming extinguished, one of these gentlemen, taking his from his mouth, handed it to the magistrate, who relighted his *puro* (cigar) at it, and returned it with a polite bow. In short, they were completely *hand and glove*." — Vol. I. pp. 239, 240.

Among the objects of greatest interest in the capital, are its religious houses, still continued in all their primitive rigor, and the more curious from the difficulty now of meeting with similar specimens in Europe. They, indeed, seem to carry us back to the twilight of the sixteenth century, in the early part of which many of them were founded. Admission to them, especially those appropriated to the women, is exceedingly difficult to natives, still more so to foreigners. Our author's position secured to her the "Open, sesame!" here, as in every other quarter. In one of these convents, she witnessed the ceremony of taking the veil. It has been often described; but we have never seen a picture of the domestic distress, occasioned by the separation of the destined "bride of Christ" from her family, painted with such touching interest, as in the following passages.

"I had almost made up my mind to see no more such scenes, which, unlike *pulque* and bull-fights, I dislike more and more upon trial; when we received an invitation, which it was not easy to refuse, but was the more painful to accept, being acquainted, though slightly, with the victim. I send you the printed note of invitation.

“ ‘ On Wednesday, the — of this month, at six o'clock in the evening, my daughter, Doña Maria de la Concepcion, P——e —, will assume the habit of a Nun of the choir and the black veil in the Convent of Our Lady of the Incarnation. I have the honor to inform you of this, intreating you to co-operate with your presence in the solemnity of this act, a favor which will be highly esteemed by your affectionate servant, who kisses your hand.

“ ‘ MARIA JOSEFA DE —.

“ ‘ Mexico, June —, 1840.’

“ Having gone out in the carriage to pay some visits, I suddenly recollected, that it was the very morning of the day in which this young girl was to take the veil, and also, that it was necessary to inquire where I was to be placed ; for, as to entering the church with the crowd on one of these occasions, it is out of the question ; particularly when, the girl being, as in the present case, of distinguished family, the ceremony is expected to be peculiarly magnificent. I accordingly called at the house, was shown up stairs, and, to my horror, found myself in the midst of a ‘ goodlie companie,’ in rich array, consisting of the relations of the family, to the number of about a hundred persons ; the Bishop himself in his purple robes and amethysts, a number of priests, the father of the young lady in his general’s uniform ; she herself in purple velvet, with diamonds and pearls, and a crown of flowers ; the *corsage* of her gown entirely covered with little bows of ribband of divers colors, which her friends had given her ; each adding one, like stones thrown on a cairn in memory of the departed. She had, also, short sleeves and white satin shoes.

“ Being very handsome, with fine black eyes, good teeth, and fresh color, and, above all, with the beauty of youth, for she was but eighteen, she was not disfigured, even by this overloaded dress. Her mother, on the contrary, who was to act the part of Madrina, who wore a dress *fac-simile*, and who was pale and sad, her eyes almost extinguished with weeping, looked like a picture of misery in a ball-dress. In the adjoining room, long tables were laid out, on which servants were placing refreshments for the *fête* about to be given on this joyous occasion. I felt somewhat shocked, and inclined to say, with Paul Pry, ‘ Hope I don’t intrude.’ But my apologies were instantly cut short, and I was welcomed with true Mexican hospitality ; repeatedly thanked for my kindness in coming to see the nun, and hospitably pressed to join the family feast. I only got off upon a promise of returning at half past five, to accompany them to the ceremony, which, in fact, I greatly preferred to going there alone.

"I arrived at the hour appointed, and, being led up stairs by the Senator Don ———, found the morning party, with many additions, lingering over the dessert. There was some gayety, but evidently forced. It reminded me of a marriage-feast, previous to the departure of the bride, who is about to be separated from her family for the first time. Yet how different in fact this banquet, where the mother and daughter met together for the last time on earth !

"At stated periods, indeed, the mother may hear her daughter's voice, speaking to her as from the depths of the tomb ; but she may never more fold her in her arms, never more share in her joys or in her sorrows, or nurse her in sickness ; and when her own last hour arrives, though but a few streets divide them, she may not give her dying blessing to the child, who has been, for so many years, the pride of her eyes and heart.

"I have seen no country, where families are so knit together as in Mexico, where the affections are so concentrated, or where such devoted respect and obedience are shown by the married sons and daughters to their parents. In that respect, they always remain as little children. I know many families, of which the married branches continue to live in their father's house, forming a sort of small colony, and living in the most perfect harmony. They cannot bear the idea of being separated, and nothing but dire necessity ever forces them to leave their *fatherland*. To all the accounts, which travellers give them, of the pleasures to be met with in European capitals, they turn a deaf ear. Their families are in Mexico, their parents, and sisters, and relatives, and there is no happiness for them elsewhere. The greater, therefore, is the sacrifice, which those parents make, who, from religious motives, devote their daughters to a conventual life.

"——, however, was furious at the whole affair, which, he said, was entirely against the mother's consent, though that of the father had been obtained ; and pointed out to me the confessor, whose influence had brought it about. The girl herself was now very pale, but evidently resolved to conceal her agitation, and the mother seemed as if she could shed no more tears, — quite exhausted with weeping. As the hour for the ceremony drew near, the whole party became more grave and sad, all but the priests, who were smiling and talking together in groups. The girl was not still a moment. She kept walking hastily through the house, taking leave of the servants, and naming, probably, her last wishes about every thing. She was followed by her younger sisters, all in tears.

"But it struck six, and the priests intimated that it was time

to move. She and her mother went down stairs alone, and entered the carriage, which was to drive them through all the principal streets, to show the nun to the public, according to custom, and to let them take their last look, they of her, and she of them. As they got in, we all crowded to the balconies to see her take leave of her house, her aunts saying, 'Yes, child, *despidete de tu casa*, take leave of your house, for you will never see it again!' Then came sobs from the sisters, and many of the gentlemen, ashamed of their emotion, hastily quitted the room. I hope, for the sake of humanity, I did not rightly interpret the look of constrained anguish, which the poor girl threw from the window of the carriage at the home of her childhood.

"They drove off, and the relations prepared to walk in procession to the church. I walked with the Count S——o; the others followed in pairs. The church was very brilliantly illuminated, and, as we entered, the band was playing one of *Strauss's* waltzes! The crowd was so tremendous, that we were nearly squeezed to a jelly in getting to our places. I was carried off my feet between two fat Señoras in mantillas and shaking diamond pendants, exactly as if I had been packed between two movable feather beds.

"They gave me, however, an excellent place, quite close to the grating, beside the Countess de S——o, that is to say, a place to kneel on. A great bustle and much preparation seemed to be going on within the convent, and veiled figures were flitting about, whispering, arranging, &c. Sometimes a skinny old dame would come close to the grating, and, lifting up her veil, bestow upon the pensive public a generous view of a very haughty and very wrinkled visage of some seventy years standing, and beckon into the church for the major-domo of the convent, (an excellent and profitable situation by the way,) or for *Padre* this or that. Some of the holy ladies recognised and spoke to me through the grating.

"But, at the discharge of fireworks outside the church, the curtain was dropped, for this was the signal, that the nun and her mother had arrived. An opening was made in the crowd, as they passed into the church, and the girl, kneeling down, was questioned by the Bishop, but I could not make out the dialogue, which was carried on in a low voice. She then passed into the convent by a side door, and her mother, quite exhausted and nearly in hysterics, was supported through the crowd to a place beside us, in front of the grating. The music struck up; the curtain was again drawn aside. The scene was as striking here, as in the convent of Santa Teresa, but not so lugubri-

ous. The nuns, all ranged around and carrying lighted tapers in their hands, were dressed in mantles of bright blue, with a gold plate on the left shoulder. Their faces, however, were covered with deep black veils. The girl, kneeling in front, and also bearing a heavy lighted taper, looked beautiful, with her dark hair and rich dress, and the long black lashes resting on her glowing face. The churchmen near the illuminated and magnificently-decked altar, formed, as usual, a brilliant background to the picture. The ceremony was the same, as on the former occasion, but there was no sermon.

"The most terrible thing to witness, was the last, straining, anxious look, which the mother gave her daughter through the grating. She had seen her child pressed to the arms of strangers, and welcomed to her new home. She was no longer hers. All the sweet ties of nature had been rudely severed, and she had been forced to consign her, in the very bloom of youth and beauty, at the very age in which she most required a mother's care, and when she had but just fulfilled the promise of her childhood, to a living tomb. Still, as long as the curtain had not fallen, she could gaze upon her, as upon one, on whom, though dead, the coffin-lid is not yet closed.

"But, while the new-made nun was in a blaze of light, and distinct on the foreground, so that we could mark each varying expression of her face, the crowd in the church, and the comparative faintness of the light, probably, made it difficult for her to distinguish her mother; for, knowing that the end was at hand, she looked anxiously and hurriedly into the church, without seeming able to fix her eyes on any particular object; while her mother seemed, as if her eyes were glazed, so intently were they fixed upon her daughter.

"Suddenly, and without any preparation, down fell the black curtain, like a pall, and the sobs and tears of the family broke forth. One beautiful little child was carried out almost in fits. Water was brought to the poor mother; and, at last, making our way with difficulty through the dense crowd, we got into the sacristy. 'I declare,' said the Countess — to me, wiping her eyes, 'it is worse than a marriage!' I expressed my horror at the sacrifice of a girl so young, that she could not possibly have known her own mind. Almost all the ladies agreed with me, especially all who had daughters, but many of the old gentlemen were of a different opinion. The young men were decidedly of my way of thinking; but many young girls, who were conversing together, seemed rather to envy their friend, who had looked so pretty and graceful, and 'so happy,' and whose dress 'suited her so well'; and to have no objection to 'go, and do likewise.'" — Vol. I. pp. 300 – 307.

The situation might well have excited commiseration, if we can judge from the interior discipline of another convent, Santa Teresa, visited by Madame Calderon.

“ We found that the nuns had permission to put up their veils, rarely allowed in this order in the presence of strangers. They have a small garden and fountain, plenty of flowers, and some fruit ; but all is on a smaller scale, and sadder, than in the Convent of the Incarnation. The refectory is a large room with a long narrow table running all round it ; a plain deal table with wooden benches ; before the place of each nun, an earthen bowl, an earthen cup with an apple in it, a wooden plate and a wooden spoon ; — at the top of the table a grinning skull, to remind them that even these indulgences they shall not long enjoy.

“ In one corner of the room is a reading-desk, a sort of elevated pulpit, where one reads aloud from some holy book, whilst the others discuss their simple fare. They showed us a crown of thorns which, on certain days, is worn by one of their number, by way of penance. It is made of iron, so that the nails entering inwards, run into the head, and make it bleed. While she wears this on her head, a sort of wooden bit is put into her mouth, and she lies prostrate on her face till dinner is ended ; and while in this condition, her food is given her, of which she eats as much as she can, which probably is none.

“ We visited the different cells, and were horror-struck at the self-inflicted tortures. Each bed consists of a wooden plank raised in the middle, and on days of penitence, crossed by wooden bars. The pillow is wooden, with a cross lying on it, which they hold in their hands when they lie down. The nun lies on this penitential couch, embracing the cross, and her feet hanging out ; as the bed is made too short for her upon principle. Round her waist she occasionally wears a band with iron points turning inwards ; on her breast a cross with nails, of which the points enter the flesh, of the truth of which I had melancholy ocular demonstration. Then, after having scourged herself with a whip covered with iron nails, she lies down for a few hours on the wooden bars, and rises at four o'clock. All these instruments of discipline, which each nun keeps in a little box beside her bed, look as if their fitting place would be in the dungeons of the Inquisition. They made me try their *bed and board*, which I told them would give me a very decided taste for early rising.

“ Yet they all seem as cheerful as possible, though it must be confessed, that many of them look pale and unhealthy. It is said, that, when they are strong enough to stand this mode of

life, they live very long ; but it frequently happens that girls who come into this convent, are obliged to leave it from sickness, long before the expiration of their noviciate."— Vol. II. pp. 10, 11.

Yet the penance of the unfortunate recluse was not more severe, than that voluntarily incurred at certain seasons by the gay inhabitants of the capital, as the following thrilling description will show.

"But the other night I was present at a much stranger scene, at the discipline performed by the men ; admission having been procured for us by certain means, *private but powerful*. Accordingly when it was dark, enveloped from head to foot in large cloaks, and without the slightest idea of what it was, we went on foot through the streets to the church of San Agustín. When we arrived, a small side door apparently opened of itself, and we entered, passing through long vaulted passages, and up steep winding stairs, till we found ourselves in a small railed gallery, looking down directly upon the church. The scene was curious. About one hundred and fifty men, enveloped in cloaks and *sarapes*, their faces entirely concealed, were assembled in the body of the church. A monk had just mounted the pulpit, and the church was dimly lighted, except where he stood in bold relief, with his gray robes and cowl thrown back, giving a full view of his high bald forehead and expressive face.

"His discourse was a rude but very forcible and eloquent description of the torments prepared in hell for impenitent sinners. The effect of the whole was very solemn. It appeared like a preparation for the execution of a multitude of condemned criminals. When the discourse was finished, they all joined in prayer with much fervor and enthusiasm, beating their breasts and falling upon their faces. Then the monk stood up, and, in a very distinct voice, read several passages of Scripture descriptive of the sufferings of Christ. The organ then struck up the *Miserere*, and all of a sudden the church was plunged in profound darkness ; all but a sculptured representation of the Crucifixion, which seemed to hang in the air illuminated. I felt rather frightened, and would have been very glad to leave the church, but it would have been impossible in the darkness. Suddenly, a terrible voice in the dark, cried ; ' My brothers ! when Christ was fastened to the pillar by the Jews, he was *scourged* ! ' At these words, the bright figure disappeared, and the darkness became total. Suddenly, we heard the sound of hundreds of scourges descending upon the bare flesh. I cannot conceive of any thing more horrible. Before ten minutes had passed, the sound became *splashing*, from the blood that was flowing.

“I have heard of these penitences in Italian churches, and also that half of those who go there, do not really scourge themselves; but here, where there is such perfect concealment, there seems no motive for deception. Incredible as it may seem, this awful penance continued, without intermission, for half an hour! If they scourged *each other*, their energy might be less astonishing.

“We could not leave the church, but it was perfectly sickening; and, had I not been able to take hold of the Señora ——’s hand, and feel something human beside me, I could have fancied myself transported into a congregation of evil spirits. Now and then, but very seldom, a suppressed groan was heard, and occasionally the voice of the monk, encouraging them by ejaculations, or by short passages from Scripture. Sometimes the organ struck up, and the poor wretches in a faint voice tried to join in the *Miserere*. The sound of the scourging is indescribable. At the end of half an hour, a little bell was rung, and the voice of the monk was heard, calling upon them to desist; but such was their enthusiasm, that the horrible lashing continued louder and fiercer than ever.

“In vain he entreated them not to kill themselves; and assured them that Heaven would be satisfied, and that human nature could not endure beyond a certain point. No answer, but the loud sound of the scourges, which are many of them of iron, with sharp points that enter the flesh. At length, as if they were perfectly exhausted, the sound grew fainter, and, little by little, ceased altogether. We then got up in the dark, and, with great difficulty, groped our way in the pitch darkness through the galleries and down the stairs, till we reached the door, and had the pleasure of feeling the fresh air again. They say that the church floor is frequently covered with blood after one of these penances, and that a man died the other day in consequence of his wounds.

“I then went to the house of the —— Minister, where there was a *réunion*, and where I found the company comfortably engaged in eating a very famous kind of German salad, composed of herrings, smoked salmon, cold potatoes, and apples, (*salmagundi*?) and drinking hot punch. After the cold, darkness, and horrors of the church, this formed rather a contrast; and it was some time before I could shake off the disagreeable impression left by the *desagravios*, and join in the conversation.” — pp. 407–409.

Such are the transitions from scenes of penance to scenes of pleasure in this motley capital, where merry mummeries and mortifications, fastings and *fêtes*, chase one another in continual circle, converting the city alternately into a carnival

scene, and a house of correction. This may be well for the stranger, who sees novelty succeeding to novelty, while he is present at one long but ever-shifting spectacle. But for the people, thus eternally occupied with the pantomime rehearsal of the events of Scripture history, instead of the real and practical duties of the life before them, their days pass away in a round of busy idleness, in which ceremony takes place of conduct, and empty form of substance. With all their show of penitence and voluntary penance, the higher classes of Mexico are as frivolous, and the lower as corrupt, — probably more corrupt, than in any capital in Christendom.

But we are already exceeding our limits, which we regret will allow us no room for further quotation. Enough has been done in this way to show our readers the quality of the book. We have given, however, but a faint idea of the richness and singular variety of its topics, which, far from being confined to the capital, embrace various excursions in the environs and in distant parts of the country, — two of them of a bold and singularly romantic character, made on horseback for the distance of near a thousand miles. The work contains, moreover, the account of two stormy revolutions in the capital, the stirring events of which quicken the interest of the narrative, and prevent any of the languor stealing over it, which might grow out of a picture, too prolonged, it might be, of unbroken tranquillity.

The present volumes make no pretensions to enlarge the boundaries of our knowledge in respect to the mineral products of the country, its geography, its statistics, or, in short, to physical or political science. These topics have been treated with more or less depth by the various travellers, who have written since the great publications of Humboldt. We have had occasion to become tolerably well acquainted with their productions. And we may safely assert, that for spirited portraiture of society, — a society unlike any thing existing in the Old World, or the New, — for picturesque delineation of scenery, for richness of illustration and anecdote, and for the fascinating graces of style, no one of them is to be compared with "*Life in Mexico*,"
